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ABSTRACT

Despite strong research evidence on the importance of early learning for later school success, thousands of Massachusetts children enter school without the benefit of quality preschool experiences. This statewide study examined the opinions of voters, child care experts, and opinion leaders regarding early care and education in order to inform a statewide effort to meet the early childhood education needs of Massachusetts children and their families. Two 400-person voter polls were conducted, and 48 leaders from a variety of constituency groups were interviewed. Among the findings of the study are the following: (1) voters are more willing to support public financing of "early childhood education" for 3- to 5-year-olds in working families than they are of supporting "child care"; (2) fully one-third of voters identified child care and early childhood education as top Massachusetts priorities; (3) voters heavily support increased tobacco and alcohol taxes to help fund child care for working parents; (4) state government leaders place child care and early education relatively high on their list of public policy priorities; (5) although a few labor leaders view child care as an important public policy concern, child care is not a concern in other sectors; (6) voters and most opinion leaders show a stunning lack of knowledge about child care; and (7) many voters feel that caring for young children is the responsibility of their families. (Five appendices include a profile of polled voters, a list of the child care experts and opinion leaders interviewed, and information on Massachusetts' expanded state tax deductions for child and dependent care. (KB)

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# Our Youngest Children:

## Massachusetts Voters and Opinion Leaders Speak Out on Their Care and Education

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**ERRATA**

**Page 15.** The last line of the text belongs to the opening paragraph on page 21. That sentence should read: With regard to raising public revenue to fund child or day care for the children of working parents, there was widespread opposition to increasing the state's personal income and sales taxes.

**Page 25.** In the last line of the text, the word "call-" should appear after the word "but." The complete sentence should read: This leader drew a clear distinction between those who provide child care and those who advocate for child care issues, describing the providers as "smart and well-intentioned," but calling their advocates "insincere."

# Our Youngest Children:

*Massachusetts Voters and Opinion Leaders Speak Out on Their Care and Education*

**Our Youngest Children: Massachusetts Voters and Opinion Leaders Speak Out on Their Care and Education** reports the findings of a statewide research and constituency building project directed by Margaret Blood, a child policy expert and advocate for children. Through two 400-person voter polls and in-depth interviews with 48 opinion leaders from business, organized labor, government, religion, the media, education and child care, this project gathered the strategic information necessary to help inform a statewide effort to meet the early childhood education needs of Massachusetts children and their families. The project, which benefited from the guidance of a 20-member multi-sector Advisory Committee of leaders, found that:

- **Voters are willing to support government funding for three-, four- and five-year-olds in working families, when they are made aware of the benefits of "early childhood education."** Voters are more receptive to public financing when "child care" is framed as "early childhood education" for three-, four- and five-year-olds, and when the benefits of early childhood education - particularly the evidence about healthy brain development and future school success - are emphasized.

- **Fully one-third of the voters polled identified child care and early childhood education as top priorities for Massachusetts.**

- **Voters heavily support increases in taxes on tobacco and alcohol to help fund child care for the children of working parents, as long as the additional funds raised are earmarked for this purpose.**

- **State government leaders - especially state legislative leaders - place child care and early childhood education relatively high on their list of public policy priorities.** However, little agreement exists about what the funding emphasis should be (quality vs. quantity).

- **While a few labor leaders view child care as an important public policy concern, child care is barely on the radar screen of influential leaders from other sectors.** Many opinion leaders - especially those from business - said that in order to get them on board the issue of "child care," it would need to be "sold" as "early childhood education." Many opinion leaders identify "education" as the issue they are most concerned about.

- **Voters and most opinion leaders show a stunning lack of knowledge about child care.** They are not aware of the shortage of affordable child care, the actual cost of child care, or how difficult it is to find and pay for quality child care.

- **Many voters feel that caring for young children - particularly those under the age of three - is the responsibility of their families (even though 80% of Massachusetts mothers with children age three and under are employed).** Regarding single mothers, however, voters said that government should subsidize child care so that they can "find a job."

- **Voters support tax breaks for families who use child care as well as for those families who stay home to care for their children.** Voters also support tax breaks for businesses and employers who provide child care for their employees.

*Over ⇨*

The information and data gathered for this project are helping to inform a new statewide campaign, **Early Education for All**, to meet the early childhood education needs of Massachusetts children and their families. The campaign is implementing the recommendations contained in the report which call for:

- **Strengthening support for legislative action by developing a well-funded media campaign to educate the public about the benefits of investing in young children and their early childhood education.**

- **Creating and building support for an early childhood education public policy agenda that ensures that all five-year olds have access to full-day, full-year kindergarten, and that full-day, full-year early childhood education is available to all three- and four-year olds.**

- **Engaging influential new allies for children to work in political partnership with early childhood advocates, including key opinion leaders.**

- **Advocating for and supporting research that can demonstrate to Massachusetts' taxpayers how investments in young children and their early education produce measurable benefits.**

For further information, please call Amy Kershaw or Margaret Blood at 617/330-7380.

02/01

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**Copies of the report are available in pdf format at http:/www.schottcenter.org.**

# Our Youngest Children:

## Massachusetts Voters and Opinion Leaders Speak Out on Their Care and Education

A report on the findings from ...

**Strategies for Children**
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Boston, MA 02110

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'I can point out to you the children in my
classroom who will have difficulty
succeeding in the first grade.
I have children who arrive in my
kindergarten class having never been read to,
who don't know their colors,
who can't write their names or
recognize the alphabet.
Many of them lack the basic
social skills to succeed.
There has to be a way to reach them
before they start school.'

— *Ruth Cohn, kindergarten teacher*
*Maurice J. Tobin School, Boston*

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# Preface

Several years ago, I spoke at the Maurice J. Tobin School in Boston's Mission Hill neighborhood. After my presentation, I was told that Mrs. Cohn, a kindergarten teacher, wanted to see me. "I need your help," she said.

I looked around her classroom. She didn't seem to need my help. Some of the children were busily cutting and gluing colored paper, working on their art projects, while others were writing in their journals.

"I can point out to you the children in my classroom who will have difficulty succeeding in the first grade," she told me. "I have children who arrive in my kindergarten class having never been read to, who don't know their colors, who can't write their names or recognize the alphabet. Many of them lack the basic social skills to succeed. There has to be a way to reach them before they start school."

Mrs. Cohn's words, and the images of her children, have haunted me. Clearly something could — and should — be done.

An opportunity arose a few months later. Greg Jobin-Leeds, President of the Caroline and Sigmund Schott Foundation, asked if I would direct an effort to make child care and early childhood education available to all Massachusetts children. Support for this, he knew, would have to come from the public and its elected officials. And his family foundation wanted to help finance a public policy campaign to make it happen.

While his commitment and enthusiasm inspired me, I suggested that before starting such a campaign, we needed to ask some strategic questions. Researchers in Massachusetts and elsewhere were already working on the basics: What is the need for child care and early childhood education? What would it cost to meet the need?

But to run an effective public policy campaign, we also needed to answer other questions. Massachusetts has a tradition of successful advocacy for child care. However, a broad-based effort, such as the one the Schott Foundation envisioned, would require the support of more than just child care advocates and legislators.

We needed to find out who cares about child care, particularly among those who have the power to change things. We needed to learn about opinion leaders' perspectives. We needed to hear from the state legislative leadership, the business community, organized labor, the media, the Governor's office and the state's influential religious groups.

Finally, we needed to poll Massachusetts voters who could hold the ultimate power to decide whether — and how — the state acts on this crucial issue.

And so, we embarked upon an 18-month research and constituency building project. With financial support and encouragement from the Schott Foundation, along with a matching grant from The Boston Foundation, and funding from the United Way of Massachusetts Bay, the Boston Globe Foundation, the Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation, Associated Day Care Services and Work/Family Directions, and the guidance of an exceptional Advisory Committee, we polled voters and interviewed a cross-section of opinion leaders and experts on child care issues.

We believe that the information we have gathered is essential to taking the next step in this ambitious plan: to design a public policy campaign to meet the early education needs of Massachusetts youngest citizens.

At last, we have begun to respond to Mrs. Cohn's challenge.

Margaret Blood
Project Director

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## Executive Summary

Every weekday morning across Massachusetts, thousands of babies and young children come to child care centers, preschools and family child care homes for nurturing and intellectual stimulation. The babies smile and coo, and perhaps learn to clap hands. The preschoolers make friends, play with blocks, learn to count, draw faces and write the alphabet. They learn to share, solve problems, pose questions and seek answers. Massachusetts, the birthplace of public education, will spend nearly $500 million in state and federal money on child care and early childhood education in fiscal year 2000.[1] State legislative leaders rank "child care" and "early childhood education" among their top ten public policy priorities. And members of Governor Paul Cellucci's administration point to "early childhood education" as "a key to welfare reform" because it allows mothers to become employed.

So, why are thousands of young Massachusetts children still on waiting lists to find a spot in subsidized child care? And why, in a state immersed in the reform of its public schools, has relatively little attention been paid to the education of its youngest and most vulnerable children?

Through polling of voters and interviews with some of the most influential opinion leaders in Massachusetts, this project sought to find the answers to these questions. During a period of 18 months, we polled 800 voters (400 in each of two polls) and interviewed 48 leaders from a variety of constituency groups: business, government, organized labor, the media, religion, education and child care. The purpose was to gather the strategic information necessary to launch a statewide campaign to meet the child care and early childhood education needs of Massachusetts children and their families.

This information must be viewed within the context of a nation that is still confused and conflicted about how family life should run. Nearly 70% of all Massachusetts children age five and under live in either married-couple families in which both parents work or in single-parent families in which the parent is employed.[2] Today 80% of Massachusetts mothers with children age three and under are employed.[3] But 49% of the voters in our first poll said mothers of young children should not work outside the home. As the renowned pediatrician Dr. T. Berry Brazelton has said, "There is a strong unconscious bias that parents ought to take care of their own kids and we ought not to help them."[4] Our poll results seem to reflect this bias.

Among the key findings from our research:

- **When made aware of the benefits of "early childhood education," voters are willing to support government funding for three-, four- and five-year-olds in working families.** Voters are more receptive to public financing when "child care" is framed as "early childhood education" for three-, four- and five-year-olds, and when the benefits of early childhood education — particularly the evidence about healthy brain development and future school success — are emphasized.

- **Fully one-third of the voters polled identified child care and early childhood education as top priorities.** It is not that these issues are unimportant to the majority of voters. However, when they are compared with issues such as





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preventing violence, improving the schools and ensuring access to affordable health care, they rank lower.

- **State government leaders — especially state legislative leaders — are ahead of the electorate on the issues of child care and early childhood education, placing them relatively high on their lists of public policy priorities.** These leaders are divided, however, on how they view child care and therefore on where to place the emphasis when it comes to funding: on improving the quality of child care and stressing early childhood education as an inherent benefit to *children* or on expanding access to child care for the "convenience" of *working parents*.

- **Child care is barely on the radar screen of influential leaders from other key sectors.** While a few labor leaders view child care as an important public policy concern, most opinion leaders identify education as the issue they are most concerned about. Many opinion leaders — especially those from business — said that in order to get them on board the issue of "child care," it would need to be "sold" as "early childhood education." And they need to be shown how public investments in early childhood education will improve educational outcomes and produce skilled workers in Massachusetts.

- **Voters and most opinion leaders show a stunning lack of knowledge about child care.** They are not aware of the dearth of affordable child care, the actual cost of child care, or how difficult it is to find and pay for quality child care. Many Massachusetts voters are older, do not have young children at home or do not need child care.

- **When it comes to paying for child care, most voters feel that it is a family responsibility.** Most voters are reluctant to support government funding for child care, particularly for families earning more than $20,000 a year. While the majority of voters are disinclined to directly subsidize child care, they are supportive of tax breaks for families who use child care, and are even more supportive of tax breaks for businesses and employers who provide child care for their employees. Voters also support tax breaks for parents who stay home to care for their children.

- **Many voters are opposed to increases in personal income taxes and sales taxes in order to help fund child care for working families, but they heavily support increases in "sin" taxes to help fund it.** Nearly two-thirds of voters are in favor of increasing "sin" taxes — on cigarettes, tobacco, beer, wine and hard liquor — if the additional funds raised are *earmarked* to provide child care for the children of working parents.

- **Many voters feel that caring for young children — particularly those under the age of three — is the responsibility of their families.** In addition, half the voters polled agree that "mothers should stay home and take care of their children while their children are young, and not take jobs outside the home."

- **With single mothers, however, voters feel that government should subsidize child care so that they can be employed.** Over half the voters polled prefer that a single mother "find a job, with the government helping to pay for her children's child care," rather than "stay at home with the government helping to pay for her children's support."

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The challenge to meet the early childhood education and child care needs of Massachusetts' youngest citizens and their families is great, but many hopeful signs are emerging. We know that 35% of voters polled think child care and early childhood education should be top priorities, and that's a good number to build on. We know that voters and opinion leaders across the board are concerned about the educational achievements of our children. State government leaders are poised to move forward on behalf of young children and their current efforts reflect this. The FY2000 state budget approved in November 1999 provides for a 25% increase in state and federal funding for child care, early childhood education and after-school programs. This represents approximately $100 million in new financial resources. State policymakers have also significantly expanded tax breaks for child care — both for parents who are employed and parents who stay at home to care for their children.

If we are to be effective in building on this progress and moving the issues of child care and early childhood education to the political foreground, those of us who want to transform what we are learning about children into policies that benefit them and their families must:

- **Elevate the public's awareness of the need, cost and benefits of quality child care and early childhood education.** We need to convince voters that quality child care and early childhood education are public investments that benefit all citizens, including those who do not have young children. To do this, we must find the resources to develop a statewide multi-media campaign to build support for young children and their families. The campaign must make the compelling case that investments in quality child care for very young children and early childhood education for three-, four- and five-year-olds have a positive effect on children's development and that leads to improved academic performance and ultimately to a more highly skilled workforce. The issues we found most appealing to voters in our polls should be emphasized in this campaign: research that shows how important the right kind of stimulation and nurturing are to a child's healthy brain development during the early years of life and how early childhood education contributes to later school success.

- **We must develop and build support for a public policy proposal that ensures that all young children — ages three, four and five — have access to full-day, full-year early childhood education programs.** Voters show a willingness to support publicly funded "early childhood education" for three- to five-year-olds. We must find effective ways to convey to the public and our elected officials how early childhood education benefits children by promoting their healthy development — physical, cognitive, social and emotional — and by helping to make them school-ready. We must join forces with those state policymakers who have demonstrated a commitment to these issues and who are willing to lead the charge.

- **For younger children — from birth to age three — we must build support for a constellation of public policies and programs to meet their needs and those of their families.** Most voters are opposed to the notion of early childhood education for very young children (under the age of three) and believe that caring for very young children is a family responsibility. The reality, however, is that most young children in Massachusetts live in families in which their parents are employed, at least part-time.



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For these young children and their families, it is essential that we increase access to quality child care, expand parental leave, and promote workplace policies that support flexible work schedules, job-sharing and other strategies that make it possible for parents to meet the needs of their children while fulfilling their responsibilities to their employers. We need to show how quality child care benefits not only children, but also their parents, employers and the community-at-large. When parents know that their children are being cared for in a safe, stable and stimulating environment, they can go to work with peace of mind and be more effective and productive employees.

- **We must engage influential new political allies for children to work in partnership with child care advocates.** Leaders outside of state government — whose clout is usually untapped when it comes to helping children — are willing to lend their influence to develop and promote an early childhood education policy initiative. These opinion leaders from business, organized labor and religion, working side-by-side with child care and early childhood education advocates and committed state policymakers, must be the "new messengers" in a public policy campaign to meet the needs of young children and their families.

- **We need research and evaluation designed to measure the short- and long-term impact of child care and early childhood education on children in Massachusetts.** We need a better understanding of the impact of the current investment of state and federal funds in child care and early childhood education. We need more accurate information on who is being served, when and where they are being served, and what the specific outcomes and long-term benefits are. We need to show that investments in early childhood programs will improve educational outcomes for Massachusetts children.

As one top policymaker interviewed for this project put it, "Anyone who has children — or cares about children — should care about child care." And as Edward Zigler, a Yale University child psychologist and a founder of the Head Start program, told *The New York Times* in October 1999, "Anybody interested in education has got to be interested in getting there early."[5]

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## Introduction

As we enter the 21st century, the care and education of our youngest children remains a critical public policy issue to both the state and the nation. Today in Massachusetts there are more than 19,000 eligible children languishing on waiting lists for government subsidized child care.[6] The need for child care is made even more urgent by a strong economy and welfare reform policies that require poor mothers of young children to work. Nearly 70% of all Massachusetts children age five and under — almost 300,000 children — live either in married-couple families in which both parents work or in single-parent families in which the parent is employed.[7] Despite strong evidence from research on the importance of early learning for later school success, thousands of Massachusetts children are entering school without the benefit of quality preschool experiences to promote their language, numeracy and social development. In its 1999 report, "*Setting a Course for Early Childhood Education and Care in Massachusetts,*" the Massachusetts Department of Education recommends that the Commonwealth expand access and increase the quality of child care and early childhood education. This recommendation includes care for infants and toddlers, preschool services, full-day kindergarten and school-age programs.

In recent years, there has been significant progress. At the state level, strong bipartisan support for child care and early childhood education among public policymakers has led to substantial advances. Among the gains: more than a 325% increase in state and federal funding for child care and early childhood education in Massachusetts between 1990 and 1999[8]; the evolution of the Department of Education's Community Partnership Program which provides funding for early childhood education services for three- and four-year-olds; the creation of the Office of Child Care Services; passage of the Children's License Plate bill which funds quality improvements in child care; and sizable expansions in the state child and dependent care tax deductions.

On a national level, the 1997 White House Conference on Child Care led to the development of a national child care agenda. Carnegie Corporation's "Starting Points" project has generated a growing national public awareness of how vital the experiences of the early years of life are to a child's healthy development. It has highlighted brain research that points to a "window of opportunity" — from birth to three years of age — when the right kind of stimulation and nurturing can dramatically affect a child's development and prospects for future success. Today the federal government invests nearly $16 billion in child care, early childhood education and after-school care.[9] And both the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates have outlined significant commitments to child care and early childhood education in their campaign platforms.

**Despite strong evidence from research on the importance of early learning for later school success, thousands of Massachusetts children are entering school without the benefit of quality preschool experiences to promote their language, numeracy and social development.**



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The Massachusetts Department of Education's report quotes respected Yale University child development researchers Sharon Lynn Kagan and Nancy E. Cohen who wrote in 1997: "Today an unprecedented number of innovative efforts in early education and care constitute a nascent reform movement. The rough planks for a change agenda are already in place — isolated and incomplete, to be sure, but promising nevertheless."[10] As we enter the new millennium, 42 states provide funding for some preschool programs, mostly for low-income children. Only the state of Georgia provides early childhood education for all four-year-old children. Despite the emergence of a panoply of programs and services, and the accumulating scientific evidence, the state and the nation lack a coherent and cohesive child care and early childhood education policy.

***"Our Youngest Children: Massachusetts Voters and Opinion Leaders Speak Out on Their Care and Education"*** seeks to illuminate the issues that have prevented child care from taking political center stage in Massachusetts. With the help of two statewide polls, it provides a portrait of Massachusetts voters — their priorities as well as their understanding of child care issues. It summarizes the views of influential opinion leaders, and finally, it looks to the future, with next steps to move the child care and early childhood education agenda forward in Massachusetts.

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## Project Goals and Design

This project's goal was, most simply, to find out who cares about child care and who is willing to help make it a top priority on the state political agenda. To do this, we needed to find out how child care ranked in importance among key opinion leaders and voters in Massachusetts.We also needed to learn how "child care" is perceived by opinion leaders and voters and what term (i.e., "child care," "day care," or "early childhood education") is best used to garner support for this issue. And, we wanted to gather data on the depth of public understanding about the need, the availability and the costs of child care. Ultimately, we required information that would help launch a public policy campaign to reach the goal of having quality affordable child care available for all children.

Begun in early 1998, the project had four phases:

### Research and Planning

The first phase focused on the selection of a seasoned pollster, formation of a multidisciplinary 20-member Advisory Committee [See Appendix A], and interviews with ten key opinion leaders to help inform our strategy and survey questions. The Advisory Committee Members were selected to represent a cross-section of constituency groups, many of which do not traditionally participate together in discussions of child care issues.

### Statewide Polling

During the second phase, Irwin "Tubby" Harrison of Harrison & Goldberg, a Massachusetts-based polling firm specializing in political and public affairs opinion research, conducted two statewide non-partisan polls. The polls used telephone interviews to survey 400 registered voters in the fall of 1998 and another 400 voters in the spring of 1999. Each poll consisted of a random sampling of voters and closely mirrored the current demographic profile of Massachusetts voters. [See Appendix B]

### Interviews with Opinion Leaders and Child Care Experts

In the third phase, we interviewed 38 other leaders, including those from business, government, religion, organized labor, education, the media and child care. [See Appendix C] We asked how they view various issues related to child care, how high a priority it is in their personal and professional lives, and what their thoughts were about financing child care, among other relevant topics. The interviews were conducted between June 1998 and July 1999.

### Analysis and Recommendations

During the last phase, we analyzed the two voter polls and the 48 opinion leader interviews, and drew the conclusions for recommendations and next steps presented in this report.



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## Voter Polls

### The Questions

The first poll was designed to find out how important the issue of child care was to voters, what term or terms were best used to garner voters' support for child care, what voters knew about the availability and cost of child care, and how voters viewed issues of financing, government subsidies and related topics. Specifically, the first poll addressed the following:

- How important a priority child or day care was to voters.
- How familiar voters were with the need for child or day care and/or waiting lists.
- How familiar voters were with the costs of child or day care.
- How voters thought child or day care should be paid for.
- Whom voters thought should receive subsidized child or day care.
- What kind of taxes or tax breaks voters would support to fund child or day care.

The second poll was informed by the first poll's findings and zeroed in on making the connection between child care and voters' interest in education (improving children's academic achievement). This poll also included questions that gauged voters' priorities, and their views on who should pay for early childhood education for children of working parents and at what age children of working parents should receive financial assistance or government subsidies for early childhood education. This was a shorter poll and only the most significant findings — which concerned voters' support for publicly financed early childhood education — are reported here.



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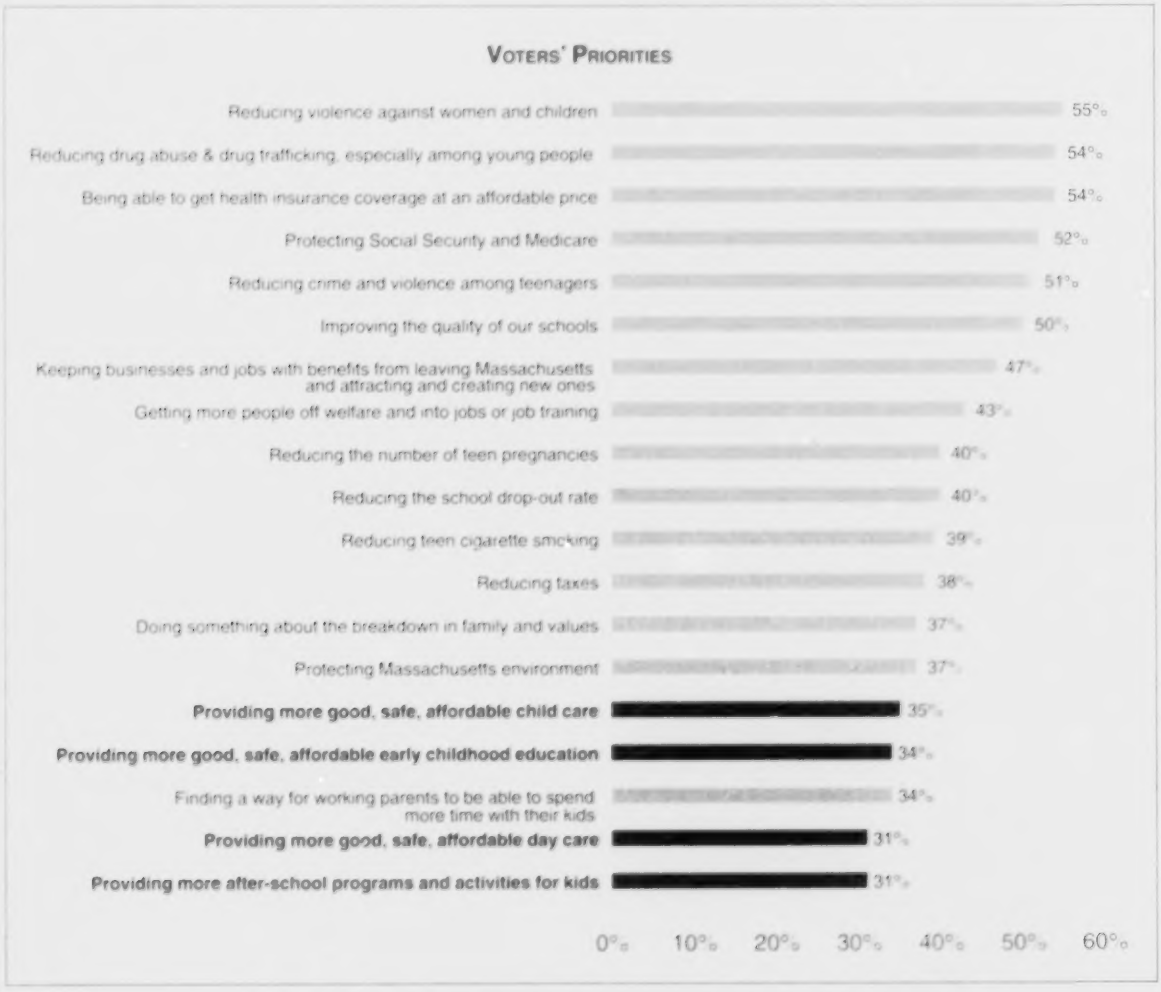
# The Findings

## Voters' Priorities

To find out how important "child care" and the related issues and terms (i.e., "day care," "early childhood education" and "after-school programs") were to voters, poll participants were read a list of 19 issues and were asked to identify the importance of each issue to Massachusetts. They were asked to rate each issue using a scale of zero to 100, with 100 being a top priority and zero being not important. Voters rated each issue independently of the other issues and could rate as many items as they wanted as a top priority.

While half of the voters polled said "improving the quality of our schools" should be a top priority, just 35% rated "child care" as a top priority. The majority of voters judged child care and other related issues of concern to working parents as less important than: reducing violence against women and children, being able to get affordable health insurance, reducing drug abuse, protecting Social Security and Medicare, reducing crime and violence among teenagers, and improving the quality of the schools, among other issues.


Voters' Priorities
Reducing violence against women and children 55%
Reducing drug abuse & drug trafficking, especially among young people 54%
Being able to get health insurance coverage at an affordable price 54%
Protecting Social Security and Medicare 52%
Reducing crime and violence among teenagers 51%
Improving the quality of our schools 50%
Keeping businesses and jobs with benefits from leaving Massachusetts and attracting and creating new ones 47%
Getting more people off welfare and into jobs or job training 43%
Reducing the number of teen pregnancies 40%
Reducing the school drop-out rate 40%
Reducing teen cigarette smoking 39%
Reducing taxes 38%
Doing something about the breakdown in family and values 37%
Protecting Massachusetts environment 37%
Providing more good, safe, affordable child care 35%
Providing more good, safe, affordable early childhood education 34%
Finding a way for working parents to be able to spend more time with their kids 34%
Providing more good, safe, affordable day care 31%
Providing more after-school programs and activities for kids 31%
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%



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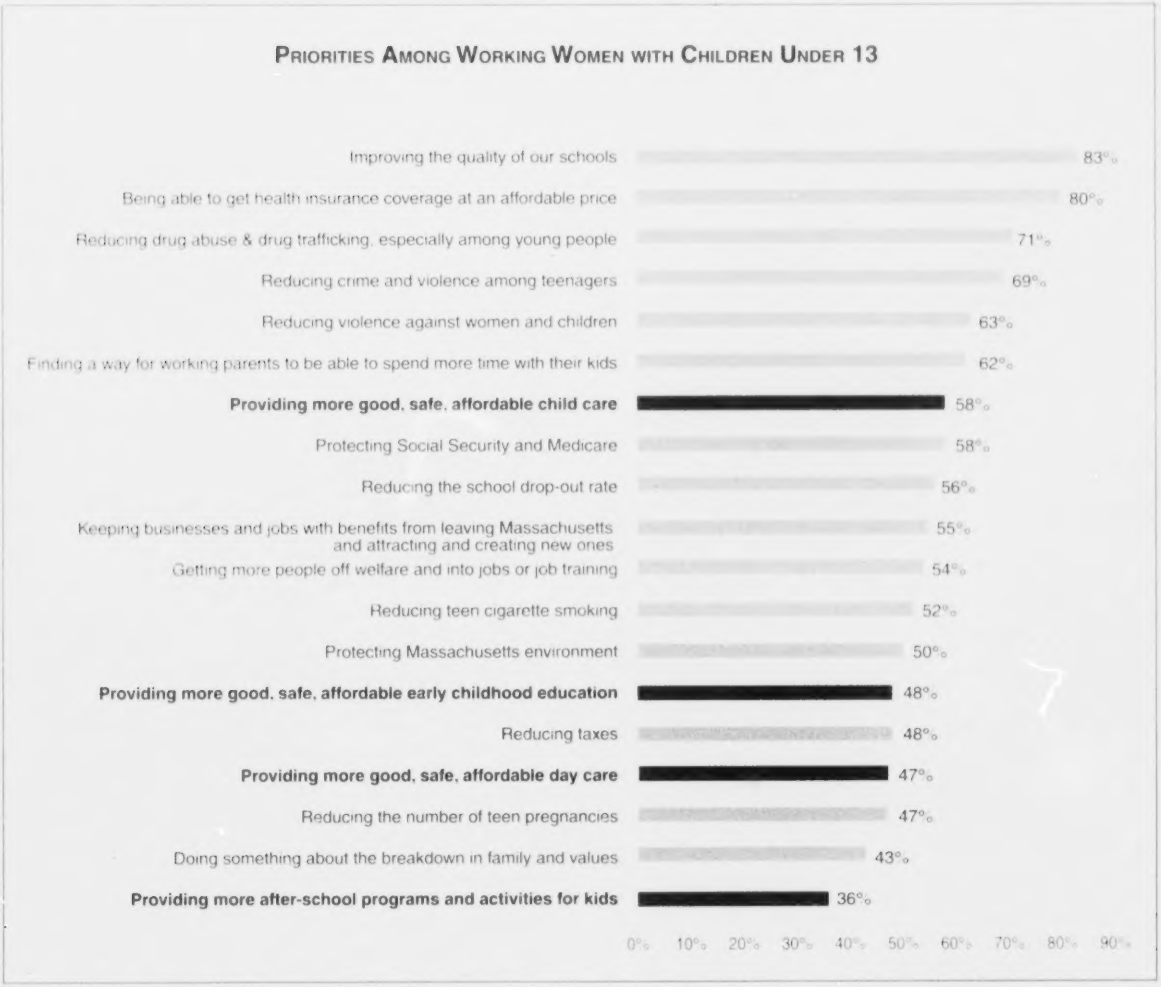
## Priorities Among Working Women with Children Under 13

Even among voters who are working women with children under 13, six issues ranked higher as priorities than child care. However, more than half (58%) of this group rated the issue of "providing more good, safe, affordable child care" as a top priority, along with "protecting Social Security and Medicare." The top concerns of this group were: improving the quality of the schools, being able to get affordable health insurance coverage, reducing drug abuse, reducing crime and violence among teenagers, and reducing violence against women and children, followed by finding a way for working parents to spend more time with their kids.

With regard to raising public revenue


PRIORITIES AMONG WORKING WOMEN WITH CHILDREN UNDER 13
Improving the quality of our schools 83%
Being able to get health insurance coverage at an affordable price 80%
Reducing drug abuse & drug trafficking, especially among young people 71%
Reducing crime and violence among teenagers 69%
Reducing violence against women and children 63%
Finding a way for working parents to be able to spend more time with their kids 62%
Providing more good, safe, affordable child care 58%
Protecting Social Security and Medicare 58%
Reducing the school drop-out rate 56%
Keeping businesses and jobs with benefits from leaving Massachusetts and attracting and creating new ones 55%
Getting more people off welfare and into jobs or job training 54%
Reducing teen cigarette smoking 52%
Protecting Massachusetts environment 50%
Providing more good, safe, affordable early childhood education 48%
Reducing taxes 48%
Providing more good, safe, affordable day care 47%
Reducing the number of teen pregnancies 47%
Doing something about the breakdown in family and values 43%
Providing more after-school programs and activities for kids 36%
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90%

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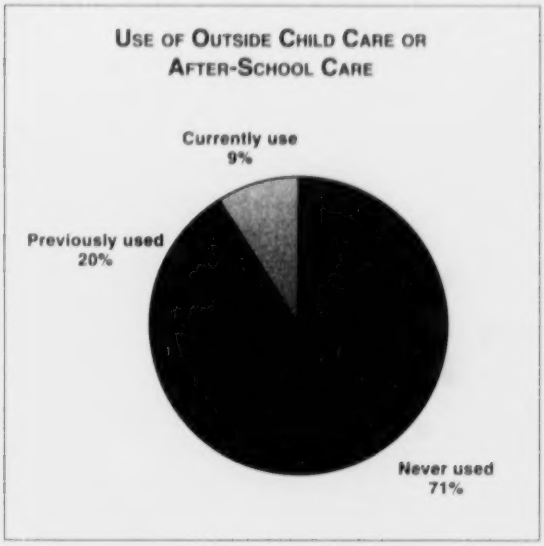
## Voters' Use of Child Care or After-School Care

A vast majority of Massachusetts voters reported that they did not have first hand experience with child care or after-school care. Many Massachusetts voters are older, do not have young children at home or do not need child care. Almost three-quarters of voters reported they had never used child care or after-school care, including nearly half of those voters who have children under age 18.

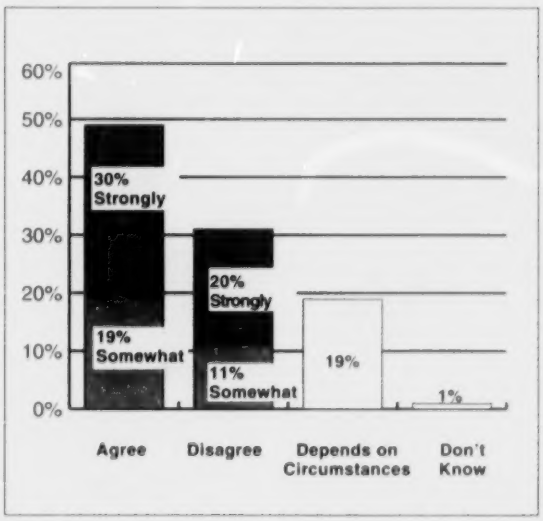
For those voters who had experience using child care or after-school care, child care was considered a higher priority among those who used a relative to care for their children than it was among those who rely on a child care center, a family day care provider or an adult sitter. Of this group, 42% ranked it a top priority.




## Voters' Preference for Mothers to Stay Home to Care for Children

Voters were asked if mothers should stay home and take care of their children while their children are young and not take jobs outside the home. Half (49%) agreed that mothers with young children should not take jobs outside the home. Today in Massachusetts, 80% of all mothers with children age three years and under are employed. [11]

Voters were asked to respond to the following: *Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: "Mothers should stay home and take care of their children while their children are young and not take jobs outside the home."*

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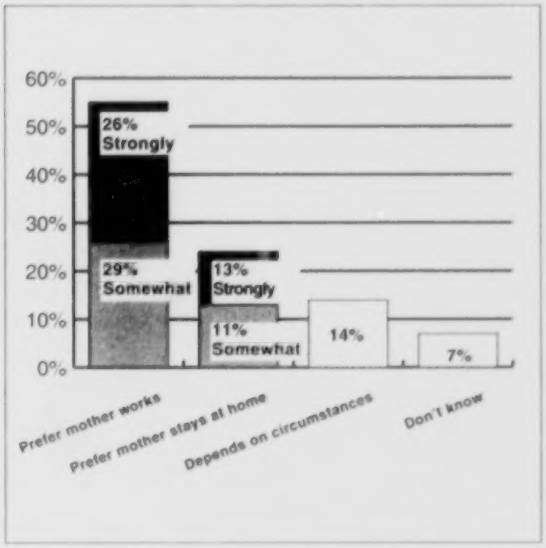
## Voters' Preference for Single Mothers to Work Outside the Home

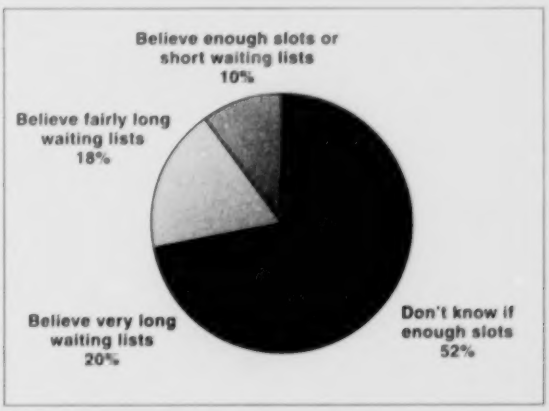
When voters were asked about single mothers, a majority felt that the government should subsidize child or day care so these mothers could move into the paid labor force. Of voters polled, 55% preferred that a single mother "find a job with the government helping to pay for her children's child or day care" rather than "stay at home and care for her children with the government helping to pay for her children's support." Today in Massachusetts, 21% (88,835) of all children age five and under live in a family headed by a single mother.[12] Sixty percent (53,558) of these children's mothers are employed.[13]

Voters were asked: *What if the mother is a single parent? In that case, do you strongly prefer having her find a job with the government helping to pay for her children's day care, somewhat prefer having her find a job with the government helping to pay for her children's day care, somewhat prefer having her stay at home and care for her children with the government helping to pay for her children's support, or strongly prefer having her stay at home and care for her children with the government helping to pay for her children's support?*




## Voters' Understanding of the Need for Government Subsidized Child or Day Care

Most voters were not aware of the shortage of affordable or subsidized child or day care slots. More than half of voters polled said that they did not know whether there were enough child or day care slots for families who could not afford to pay for them; one in ten voters polled mistakenly thought that there were enough slots or that the waiting lists were short. Currently there are more than 19,000 eligible children on waiting lists for subsidized child care in Massachusetts.[14]


Believe enough slots or short waiting lists 10%
Believe fairly long waiting lists 18%
Believe very long waiting lists 20%
Don't know if enough slots 52%

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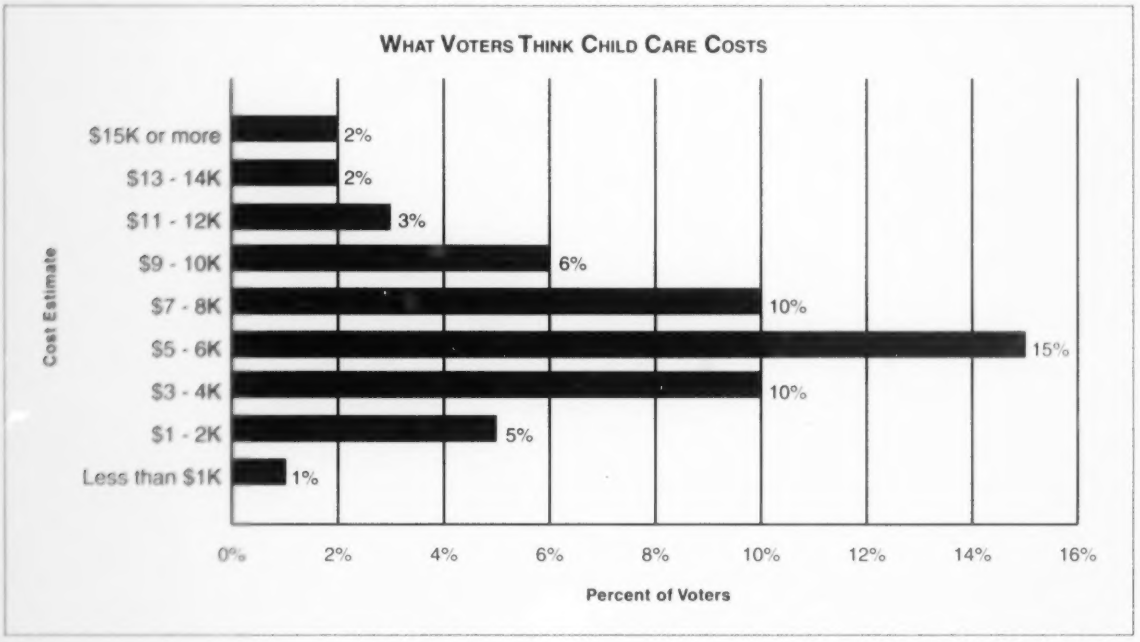
## Voters' Familiarity with the Cost of Child or Day Care

Nearly half (46%) of voters polled said they did not know how much it costs in their area for a parent to send a child to a child or day care center. The other half of voters estimated costs ranging from $1,000 to $10,000 per year. The Massachusetts Department of Education reports that center-based child or day care costs range from $6,000 to $14,000 per year for each child.[15]




## Voters' Views on Who Should Pay for Child Care

Many voters believe that paying for child care is a family responsibility. When asked to select among a list of options, more than half of voters polled felt that parents should pay for "all" or "most" of the cost of child care. Even among those currently using child care or after-school care, fully 62% said the "parents themselves" should pay for all or most of the cost — a higher percentage than voters overall. The Massachusetts Department of Education reports that parents are the primary funding source for child care, early childhood education and after-school care, "providing about 65% of the total funds spent."[16]

| | All | Most | Some | None |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Parents** | 24% | 31% | 37% | 0% |
| **Business/ employers** | 1% | 8% | 61% | 23% |
| **Charitable organizations** | 0% | 2% | 54% | 34% |
| **City/Town government** | 1% | 4% | 43% | 47% |
| **State government** | 1% | 3% | 58% | 34% |
| **Federal government** | 1% | 5% | 51% | 39% |



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## Voters' Preferences for Types of Families to Receive Government Subsidies

Voters were asked whether different types of families should receive government subsidies for child or day care, and if so, for what percentage of the cost. Slightly more than half the voters felt that families with incomes under $10,000 should receive a subsidy of 75% to 100% of the total cost. Voters were generally unwilling to support government subsidies for child or day care for families with annual incomes above $20,000. Voters were most willing to provide government subsidies to families who are on welfare and trying to get off it by going to school or by participating in a job training program.

| | 100% subsidy | 75% subsidy | 50% subsidy | 25% subsidy | None | Depends | Don't Know/ No Answer |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Families on welfare trying to get off by going to school or job training program** | 37% | 22% | 24% | 6% | 6% | 4% | 1% |
| **Families where parent(s) are going to college instead of work** | 18% | 18% | 24% | 13% | 20% | 5% | 3% |
| **Working Families with Annual Incomes of:** | | | | | | | |
| Less than $10K | 33% | 22% | 20% | 9% | 11% | 3% | 2% |
| Between $10 - 20K | 17% | 23% | 23% | 15% | 15% | 5% | 1% |
| $20 - 30K | 6% | 12% | 28% | 20% | 29% | 4% | 1% |
| $30K - 40K | 3% | 8% | 16% | 22% | 46% | 4% | 2% |
| $40 - 50K | 2% | 3% | 8% | 17% | 64% | 5% | 1% |
| $50 - 60K | 2% | 1% | 6% | 11% | 76% | 3% | 1% |
| $60 - 75K | 2% | 0% | 3% | 7% | 85% | 2% | 1% |
| $75 - 100K | 2% | 0% | 1% | 5% | 88% | 2% | 1% |
| $100 - 200K | 2% | 0% | 1% | 3% | 91% | 2% | 1% |
| More than $200K | 2% | 0% | 1% | 2% | 92% | 2% | 1% |

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## Voters' Preferences for Who Should Receive Government Subsidies Based on Age of Child

Voters were next asked to assume that the government does provide financial assistance or subsidies to working parents to help defray the cost of child or day care. They were then asked to which age group or groups of children the government should provide financial assistance for child or day care.

Voters were generally more supportive of subsidies for children age five and under than they were for children age six and older. When asked about subsidizing child or day care according to the age of the child, nearly two-thirds of voters polled felt that government should subsidize child or day care for working families with children age five or under.

Voters were generally more willing to support child or day care subsidies for working families when the question focused on the age of the child, rather than on family income.

| | Strongly feel should provide | Somewhat feel should provide | Somewhat feel should not provide | Strongly feel should not provide | Depends | Don't Know/ No answer |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| < 1 year of age | 38% | 19% | 7% | 22% | 12% | 2% |
| 1 - 2 yrs | 40% | 27% | 5% | 16% | 10% | 2% |
| 3 year-olds | 42% | 32% | 3% | 11% | 9% | 2% |
| 4 year-olds | 41% | 32% | 4% | 12% | 8% | 2% |
| 5 year-olds | 33% | 29% | 7% | 18% | 9% | 2% |
| 6 - 10 yrs | 20% | 23% | 11% | 31% | 11% | 3% |
| 11 - 14 yrs | 10% | 22% | 14% | 42% | 9% | 3% |
| 15 & 16 year-olds | 6% | 11% | 17% | 55% | 8% | 3% |
| 17 & 18 year-olds | 3% | 6% | 17% | 65% | 6% | 2% |
| All children regardless of age or family income | 7% | 18% | 12% | 35% | 23% | 4% |





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## Voters' Preferences for Specific Taxes to Fund Child or Day Care

to fund child or day care for the children of working parents, there was widespread opposition to increasing the state's personal income and sales taxes. Voters were much more supportive of increasing "sin taxes" on cigarettes, tobacco, beer, wine and hard liquor. Nearly two-thirds of voters were "strongly" or "somewhat in favor" of increasing these taxes if the additional money raised was *earmarked* to provide child or day care for the children of working parents.

| | Strongly favor | Somewhat favor | Somewhat oppose | Strongly oppose | Don't Know/ No answer |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| An increase in the state's **personal income tax** | 8% | 25% | 16% | 45% | 6% |
| An increase in the state's **sales tax** | 7% | 21% | 20% | 47% | 5% |
| An increase in the state's **cigarette or tobacco tax** | 47% | 15% | 9% | 26% | 2% |
| An increase in the state's **tax on beer or wine** | 39% | 23% | 11% | 25% | 2% |
| An increase in the state's **tax on hard liquor** | 41% | 22% | 10% | 24% | 2% |

Due to rounding, not all figures add to 100%.

## Voters' Support for Tax Breaks for Child or Day Care

While voters were not willing to generously subsidize child or day care, they were more likely to support tax breaks — both for stay-at-home parents and for those who use substitute care. Almost three-quarters of voters supported tax breaks for those who use substitute care, while more than half supported tax breaks for parents who stay home to care for their children. Tax breaks were most heavily supported (85%) for businesses that provide child care for their employees. The FY2000 state budget significantly increases state tax deductions for families who use child care, as well as for those who stay at home to care for their children. [Appendix D]

| | Strongly favor | Somewhat favor | Somewhat oppose | Strongly oppose | Don't Know/ No answer |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Giving **tax breaks to businesses** that provide child or day care for their employees | 55% | 30% | 6% | 8% | 2% |
| Giving **tax breaks to women** who stay at home to care for their children instead of taking employment | 32% | 29% | 12% | 21% | 6% |
| Giving **tax breaks to men** who stay at home to care for their children instead of taking employment | 26% | 28% | 12% | 26% | 7% |
| Giving **tax breaks to families** who use child or day care | 36% | 38% | 7% | 13% | 6% |

Due to rounding, not all figures add to 100%.

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## Making the Link Between Child Care and Education

Based on the findings from our first poll which showed widespread support among voters for "improving the quality of our schools," we focused our questions in the second poll on "early childhood education" to determine if voter support could be increased by linking the issue of child care to voters' interest in improving education. We also learned from our first poll that voters were more supportive of providing government subsidies for the children of working parents when the questions focused on the child (specifically the age of the child) rather than on the parents or the family (and specifically family income). We subsequently framed our questions in the second poll to emphasize the child, rather than the parents or the family.

Armed with this information, our second poll described the benefits of early childhood education for children. We then asked voters to assume that the government does provide financial assistance or subsidies to working parents to help cover the cost of early childhood education. For each of five different children's age groups (ranging from birth to five years of age), we asked whether voters felt the government should or should not provide financial assistance for early childhood education for children in that age group.

In general, the older the child (between the ages of birth to five), the more supportive voters were of providing government subsidies for early childhood education. They were most willing to support publicly funded early childhood education for three- and four- and five-year-olds of working parents. This was particularly true when they were told about research that shows how important nurturing and stimulation are to healthy brain development in young children and about the benefits of early childhood education in preparing children for later school success. In a follow-up question, many voters expressed the view that caring for young children, particularly under the age of three, was the responsibility of the family.



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# Opinion Leader and Child Care Expert Interviews

We asked 52 Massachusetts citizens influential in the fields of business, government, organized labor, religion, education, child care and the media to talk to us about child care. Some refused, but 48 agreed [See Appendix C]. Between June 1998 and July 1999, we interviewed them in candid (not-for-attribution) conversations that gave us a rare glimpse into their thinking. Many of them have the ability to move forward a child care and early childhood education agenda in Massachusetts. Among them, we found some new, potential allies for children.

We interviewed leaders in a wide variety of sectors, but focused much of our attention on the state's top business executives and employers. We interviewed CEOs, presidents, and executive vice presidents representing banking, financial services, insurance, health care, manufacturing, telecommunications, defense, a major supermarket and the media. This group tended to be mostly men, generally white and middle-aged, and had little personal experience with child care.

We also interviewed top labor leaders and education experts — from the president and the secretary/treasurer of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO and union officials who have successfully negotiated for child care benefits, to the presidents of both state teacher unions. We talked with the chairman of the state Board of Education and two school superintendents. We spoke with state government leaders from both sides of the aisle — legislative leaders and key members of Governor Paul Cellucci's administration. We spoke with a mayor, the publishers of two daily newspapers, and representatives of influential religious groups. And, of course, we spoke with experts from the field of child care — nonprofit and for-profit, advocates and providers.

We asked how they viewed child care and how they regard the efforts of those who advocate for child care and the effectiveness of their messages. We asked who they thought cares about child care and how it should be financed. The terminology the interviewees used to discuss these issues — "child care," "day care," and "early childhood education" — is indicated in quotation marks in the following summary of their responses.

## How High a Priority is Child Care?

State legislative leaders named "child care" and "early childhood education" as top public policy priorities. Members of Governor Paul Cellucci's administration reported that "early childhood education" is a high priority because it is "a key to welfare reform," making it possible for mothers to work outside the home. For most other opinion leaders, "child care" was clearly an issue that they seldom, if ever, thought about. It was not considered a top priority by any business leader we interviewed.

Education, however, was viewed as a top priority for the majority of leaders interviewed, including almost every business leader. These leaders linked education and the improvement of the schools to their need for "a qualified and skilled labor force." However, the emphasis on education for most of the business leaders interviewed seemed to be primarily symbolic. They discussed their companies' efforts to "adopt" schools and to encourage their employees to volunteer in particular schools. Only one of the business leaders appeared to have

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thought about a broader strategic plan or initiative to improve the public schools.

**State legislative leaders named 'child care' and 'early childhood education' as top public policy priorities...It was not a top priority for any business leader we interviewed.**

Business leaders were interested in — or at least willing to consider — helping to address the issue of "child care" if it was truly "early childhood education." One CEO said, "Ed-ucation is the hook to getting the business community involved." Yet another suggested, "If you want to sell it to the business community, you need to sell it as education." Still another business executive told us, "If you want to get our CEO on board, it ain't gonna happen if you talk about day care. But if you talk about education...that could work."

A minority of senior executives felt that child care was important to their industries and that it would need to be strategically marketed to their CEOs as something that would help the bottom-line by boosting worker productivity. In these companies, selling "child care" as "education" wouldn't work, they said. Right now, their CEOs are concerned about filling vacant jobs with qualified workers.

Further mirroring the opinion leader interview findings was a survey conducted for this project by the Associated Industries of Massachusetts (A.I.M.). A.I.M. is a non-partisan employer service organization with more than 5,400 member companies statewide. A.I.M.'s President and CEO, Rick Lord, served on this project's Advisory Committee. A.I.M. conducts monthly public policy surveys of a representative sample of its membership and devoted one such study to the issue of child care. In January 1999, A.I.M. sent a mail survey designed to gauge the importance of "child/day care" to 500 (about 10%) of its members. Of that group, 130 (26%) completed and returned the survey. Most (86.5%) respondents said that "child or day care" was not a high priority for their company. Only a handful of the companies who responded made any child care benefits available to their employees. A.I.M. reports that "education" and a "skilled workforce" are its members' top concerns.

Nearly all the education leaders interviewed identified "early childhood education" as a top priority. One of these leaders explained, "Public education is on the verge of extinction unless we add a big early childhood education component...legislative leaders don't understand the problems with which kids come to school — that most kids from urban areas who come into the classroom have never heard a nursery rhyme or had anyone read to them before they start school." This leader went on to say that there is a growing problem in wealthier suburban communities as well, "where parents find it easier to park their child in front of a television set or a computer rather than read to him or her."

One top public policymaker articulated his ideal vision: universal early childhood education for all children, beginning at age three; universally available after-school programs; and universally available child care for all children birth to age three. But he did not see the political support for such a vision. Ideally, he felt, the emphasis in spending should be on improving the quality of child care to meet the developmental needs of children, but he predicted that instead, the emphasis would be on spending to expand access to more affordable child care services. Politically that's where the pressure is, he said, explaining that, "There




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**Business leaders were interested in — or at least willing to consider — helping to address the issue of 'child care' if it was truly 'early childhood education.'**

will always be a disparity between the needs of working parents and state government resources."

The labor leaders we interviewed felt that "child care" was an important issue for many of their members. We were told that focus groups of Massachusetts women labor leaders found "child care" to be their number one concern. Yet only a few labor leaders have succeeded in winning child care benefits for their members' families. Union officials expressed concern that child care was a problem that was rarely solved around a union bargaining table. Often, a union official admitted, child care is used as a "bargaining chip" to get other demands met. "When the bargaining begins, one of the first things to go is child care," this labor leader explained. Another labor official wondered, "It's so big. How do we get our hands around it?"

Religious leaders said that the groups they represented would be supportive of efforts to help families and enhance educational success for children. These leaders believed that making "early childhood education" available to all children would achieve both those goals.

## How Leaders View Child Care Advocates

With the exception of state and local policymakers, a few education leaders and one union leader, the majority of opinion leaders interviewed — particularly those from the business community — said they didn't know much about nor had they ever met child care advocates. They didn't know who the advocates were or what issues they pushed for. Still, one sympathetic business leader, who had worked with child care advocates, said they were "doing the work for the business community."

Nearly all state government leaders interviewed felt child care advocates were effective in getting money and support for a narrow agenda of more subsidized child care slots and higher rates. However, one government leader said that the increase in public funding of child care was "directly related to the strength of the state's economy" and to welfare reform — rather than the result of effective political advocacy.

Several opinion leaders who had worked with child care advocates said they had been effective, but they felt that the advocates lacked a broader vision for addressing the needs of children and families. The emphasis on "slots" and "more money for child care" was not the most effective message, they said. State government leaders suggested that the message should focus on how child care improves children's well-being and prepares them for school. One key policymaker said that the child care and the early childhood education advocates must join forces around a "uniform message and agenda" in order to make progress. This leader suggested that the legislature mandate that such collaboration occur at the state level among the government agencies involved in these issues.

One key policymaker said that the child care advocates "push their personal agendas to the detriment of children." This leader drew a clear distinction between those who provide child care and those who advocate for child care issues, describing the providers as "smart and well-intentioned," but

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**One key policymaker said that the child care and early childhood education advocates must join forces around a 'uniform message and agenda' in order to make progress.**

ing their advocates "insincere." This particular leader felt that the "big shots" get too much money while the child care teachers get too little.

State political leaders also advised advocates to engage more voters — especially parents — in advocacy efforts and to broaden the base of support to include leaders from other influential sectors, particularly business. Legislative leaders said they would be most influenced by personal contact from their constituents, rather than by the mass mailing postcard campaigns often organized by advocacy groups. As one political leader explained, "Legislators are acutely sensitive to what their constituents have to say." They also need to hear from business leaders, they told us, citing the example set by business leaders involved in the United Way's Success By 6 initiative.[17]

One very powerful state policymaker told us that focusing on how investments in child care could reduce society's problems in the long term was not an effective strategy. This leader said that references to vague future savings outlined in research studies did not make an impact on those policymakers responsible for developing and living within the constraints of a year-to-year state budget.

Education leaders acknowledged that tension exists between child care providers and public school teachers, and that this tension had been felt in the political arena. They called the statehouse "the worst place to deal with it." Turf issues often arise between child care providers and teachers because of issues concerning qualifications, salaries and unionization. These leaders felt it was important for the different groups to come together around a unified agenda. As one education leader suggested: "We need a retreat with a handful of leaders from human services, health care, child care and education so we can battle it out — outside of the statehouse — and come up with a common vision and plan."

Overall, leaders felt that child care advocates needed to be less insular and develop working relationships with the broader community. One prominent business leader suggested having a series of small, informal discussions among business, labor and community leaders. Out of these discussions, he suggested, an agenda and a strategy might emerge.

## Who Cares About Child Care?

"Anyone who has children — or cares about children — should care about child care."

That's the view of one state government official, and many other leaders interviewed agreed. Most of these leaders recognized that "child care" was "a bigger problem than they could handle." One senior level executive said, "This is a public policy problem that cannot be solved by business alone." Labor leaders echoed that sentiment.

State legislative leaders identified "child care" and "early childhood education" as top public policy priorities. One such leader said these issues were definitely on his top-ten list. He explained that more and more state legislators are struggling themselves with child care needs, and that has helped to elevate the importance of the issue over the past ten years. He was careful to point out, however, that "child care" is not yet as


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high a public policy priority as "education."

Some employers admitted that access to "affordable quality child care" is a problem. They felt that employee productivity would increase and absenteeism diminish if "affordable quality child care" were readily available. Many leaders said that although they did not have the answers, they were willing to be part of the solution. Still, employers did not want to be totally responsible for providing child care because they worried about the liability and costs. They also said that child care only affects a small number of employees at any given point in time and that it wouldn't be fair to offer this benefit to some workers without offering something else to others. Some employers talked about possibly moving to an arrangement of cafeteria-style benefits in order to provide their employees with options that might include some form of child care benefits.

Four of the employers interviewed did offer on-site or near-site child care services with fees paid on a sliding scale basis. However, waiting lists and costs still keep these services out of the reach of many employees. One senior executive explained that her CEO got behind child care — and provided it on-site for employees — because it was not sold as "child care," but rather as a strategy for making employees more productive. To gain the support of top level business leaders today, this executive recommended that we work "backwards" by first recognizing employers' concerns about a skilled workforce, then linking that concern to "early childhood education."

One political leader shared his view that the business community currently sees "child care" and "early childhood education" as a "convenience." He predicted that they would eventually come to see it as a "necessity." A CEO said "child care is everyone's issue," but "business is still in the embryonic stage when it comes to being interested in children." This business leader felt that the "issues of child care" were inextricably connected to the "crisis in public education."

Leaders representative of each sector interviewed said they were willing to help. Some underscored the importance of acting now, while the economy is still strong.

## How Leaders View Child Care and Early Childhood Education

Although most interviews began with our asking about "child care," many opinion leaders quickly moved the discussion to "early childhood education." Most of the leaders viewed "child care" and "early childhood education" as two distinct issues and providing different kinds of services. Opinion leaders generally preferred to talk about "early childhood education," distinguishing it from "child care" as an educational program organized and operated by professional educators for the benefit of the child, especially low-income children.

Many opinion leaders felt that "child care" or "day care" was a custodial or babysitting service offered for the convenience of working parents and lacking in any educational value. One political leader described "day care" as "glorified babysitting for children who, by virtue of their age, can't care for themselves." This same policymaker said that education should be part of the equation but that generally it is not. "Day care is a missed opportunity," explained another very influential political leader. He felt that rather than use state funds to warehouse children, they would be better spent preparing children for school.

Legislators agreed that as a practical matter, "child care" is a necessity, although "turf issues" keep them from dealing with child care issues in a substantive way. "There is not much depth when it comes to

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**'Not having early childhood education is like building a house without a foundation.'**

**— an education leader**

the legislative and policy discussions about child care," one legislative leader commented. Although it has a stronger political constituency than "early childhood education," they feel that the image of "day care" and "child care" is not particularly positive, that the quality is poor, and that it is "a problem without a solution." Some felt that the solutions to the "problem" had to be larger than "child care" or "early childhood education." They spoke of the possibility of providing incentives and supports for mothers to stay home and care for their young children.

Many leaders drew a distinction based on the age of the child. A number of those who spoke of the "importance of early childhood education" suggested that it be made available at age three and up. Children under three should be home with their parents or in some form of high quality child care, these leaders said.

One key elected official explained that there is agreement on the need to help children. The question is on where to place the emphasis when it comes to funding. Should it be on improving the quality of child care or addressing the need to expand the quantity? And for whom? Only for low-income children or also for middle-income children? One legislative leader said that legislators would like to emphasize "education and quality" when it comes to child care, rather than simply spend money on creating more slots. He conceded, however, that just funding child care slots is less costly. Given the pressing need for more affordable care, he said, the state's emphasis would likely continue to be on providing access to custodial care rather than on guaranteeing education. Another top policymaker called for an "education reform-type plan" for child care and early childhood education.

"We're putting all our public school or public education eggs into one basket — accountability — without building a foundation for it...not having early childhood education is like building a house without a foundation," one education leader said. Another leading education expert told us, "If you were going to reinvent a school system, you would invest heavily in the front end." He wondered why attending school is not mandatory until the age of six in Massachusetts. Another opinion leader felt it was essential that the state's Education Reform Act (enacted in 1993) focus more on "early childhood education," particularly for three- and four-year olds. A business leader put it this way: "Early childhood education is the unfinished element of education reform."

The majority of opinion leaders felt that children from lower-income families were more at risk and needed early childhood education more than middle-class children. A small minority of leaders felt that "early childhood education" should be universally available to all children, beginning at age three. Several leaders agreed with the opinion of one who said, "The middle-class is going to pay for it anyway, so they might as well get the benefit too."

We talked with child care experts about

**'Early childhood education is the unfinished element of education reform.'**

**— a business leader**



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how to move the child care agenda forward. They expressed concern that most opinion leaders drew distinctions between "child care" and "early childhood education." They emphasized that "quality child care *is* early childhood education" yet also recognized their need to more adequately address this gap in understanding.

For their part, child care experts said they would welcome the active involvement of influential leaders from other sectors. They felt that sympathetic leaders from other sectors would not be perceived by policymakers as self interested and would therefore have the "clout" to get public officials' attention. They also thought that a public awareness/media campaign would be a powerful way to call attention to and build support for "child care" and "early childhood education."

## Who Should Run Child Care and Early Childhood Education Programs?

Most of those interviewed, other than the child care experts, did not hold opinions on this issue. While one education leader felt strongly that the public schools should run these programs, other leaders felt equally strongly that the public schools should stay out of it all together. Several well informed leaders urged that local communities make the decision about who should be responsible for running these programs, with many leaders feeling comfortable with a mix of public and private providers. Since most of the opinion leaders had not given the issue of child care much thought, it came as no surprise that most of them had no strong feelings about who should run what.

One business leader involved in public education initiatives challenged the teachers' unions to help convince the business community and the public that schools could be helpful in meeting the need for "early childhood education." If that happened, he acknowledged, early childhood education teachers would have to be paid more. Other business leaders felt just as strongly that the teachers' unions should be kept out of the "early childhood education" equation.

While the majority of leaders did not have strong feelings one way or the other, there was some agreement that the system should be a varied one that provides parents with options.

Most leaders expressed concern regarding the quality of child care, offering that regardless of how the services are delivered there should be uniform standards of quality, with an emphasis on education — especially for low-income children. The one education leader who advocated that the public schools run these programs conceded that it was unlikely that would ever happen because, in his view, the child care lobby is so strong. Like many of the other leaders, he urged that the quality of child care programs be improved. Part of the problem, another educator explained, is that "there is no coherent policy on early childhood education."

## How Should Child Care and Early Childhood Education Be Financed?

Most leaders said that government and parents both had a responsibility to pay for "child care." Many state political leaders felt that the business community should contribute more to help pay for "child care." One top policymaker suggested that funding for "child care" and "early childhood education" should come from a new tax earmarked for such purposes — either a new sales tax on services or a graduated state income tax. He suggested that the business community lead the charge for such a tax.

One of the business leaders said there should be a broader public commitment.

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**One executive suggested that the business community might very well support an effort to increase taxes that were earmarked for early childhood education, as long as the effort was tied to a measurable set of goals.**

"Child care shouldn't be charity," he said. "It's an investment in the development of young children that is important to everybody." Several business leaders suggested the possibility of increasing the state sales tax by one-cent and earmarking the proceeds for "early childhood education." One of these leaders explained, "If such an increase were sold as a means of helping to produce a skilled, literate work force, business would buy into it — as long as the increase was not a payroll tax." Another executive suggested that the business community might very well support an effort to increase taxes that were earmarked for early childhood education, as long as the effort was tied to a measurable set of goals. Yet another employer supported the idea of a broad-based tax — as long as it wasn't a sales tax — since it would not be a burden on business.

One business leader told us that although some corporations are providing child care services for their employees, corporate child care is not the answer. Most people, he explained, don't work for companies that are large enough to afford to provide such services. This leader recommended a national program of government-funded vouchers that would provide families up to a certain income level — perhaps $30,000 per year — with a substantial voucher to purchase "legal" (licensed) child care or early childhood education, whether public or private. He estimated the cost to be $40 billion for this kind of program. Yet another corporate executive suggested some creative funding proposals: a one-cent tax on every fax document and/or a five-cent increase in the price of postage stamps devoted to "early childhood education."

Many of the labor leaders interviewed said that most employers are not willing to pay for "child care." They said that since "child care" benefits are often negotiated away at the bargaining table, in favor of issues that are a higher priority to more members (i.e., wages, pensions, time off), it has been impossible to resolve the need this way. They shared the view of many employers that this is a public policy problem that will not be solved on a business-by-business or a union contract-by-union contract basis.

One education leader told us that state government should pay for "early childhood education," making it universally available to all children, beginning at age three. A couple of state government leaders were inclined to support this recommendation, but wondered whether it was politically feasible. The education leader further recommended that the state surplus budget be used for this purpose, explaining that such an investment would eventually pay for itself in savings reaped from reductions in the need for special education, bilingual education, remedial services and juvenile delinquency programs. Another education leader suggested that progress could be made if legislation were passed to require the construction of any new public school building to include classroom space and programs for "early childhood education."

## Who Should Get Government Subsidies?

Most leaders agreed that government funding should be made available for the purposes of subsidizing "child care" and



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"early childhood education," but only for those most in need. However, most leaders were reluctant to define "need" in any specific financial terms. Changes in welfare policy that require all parents to work mean that the government must make child care available, many of the leaders observed. As one legislative leader explained, "We're more sympathetic to working families than to welfare — there's some hostility to subsidized child care for people on welfare." Many opinion leaders said that the state's urban areas had a pressing need for "early childhood education," while only a few leaders felt that universal, publicly funded "early childhood education" was the answer. Providing "early childhood education" for all children is "really a subterfuge to help the poor," claimed one business leader who expressed concern about the state paying for such a program for "mothers who can afford to stay home." A top policymaker worried that universal "early childhood programs" would hurt those children who need the services the most because the quality of programs for low-income children would be diluted by expanding programs to children from middle-income families. Yet another leader commented that if the potential focus of a public awareness campaign was "early childhood education" (rather than "child care"), then "the idea of a subsidy for all would make sense because we currently subsidize public education."

When asked about which age groups of children should receive priority for government funding for "child care" or "early childhood education," those interviewed generally agreed that efforts should focus on young children aged two to five, although they agreed that school-age children also need "child care." For children under age two, many leaders had the impression that parents stayed home to take care of such young children and did not tend to use formal child care services.

## Additional Themes that Emerged

### Research and Data Collection

Leaders spoke about the need for solid research and data about "child care" and "early childhood education," and particularly for information that is specific to Massachusetts. Policymakers in both the legislative and executive branches talked about the lack of reliable data and information, especially with regard to "contracted slots." Some suggested that there might be a willingness in the state legislature to pay for studies that would provide such data. Policymakers said that they want to know more precisely how government money is being spent. They want more dependable information about waiting lists for "subsidized child care." And they want long-term data that show the benefits of "early childhood education." They want to know more about what the state — and its taxpayers — are getting in return for the multimillion-dollar investment in "child care" and "early childhood education."

"We need to invest more in having the state gather the data to learn who is being served, how children and/or their families are — or are not — benefiting, whether parents are employed and whether their kids are showing up for kindergarten prepared to learn," one state policymaker told us.

### Elder Care

A few leaders, particularly from the business community, worried that the growing problem of elder care could supplant any interest in child care. As the average age of the workforce continues to rise, some employers are already confronting the challenge of helping their employees care for elderly parents. Labor leaders have also begun to see the issue of caring for elderly parents emerge as a workplace issue and priority.

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### Health Care

Several leaders mentioned "health care" and the "well-being of young children" as a growing concern. A number of business leaders talked about the importance of "making sure that children are healthy" and that health services are somehow connected or linked to "child care" and "early childhood education" programs. They talked about the "need for an integrated system or a model." What was most striking was that it was easier for many of the leaders to talk about the overall health and well-being of children rather than about the specifics of "child care." This may represent an important insight about ways to engage some of these influential leaders in a campaign to meet the child care and early education needs of children.



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# Recommendations and Conclusion

## A Call to Action

While child care is not yet a top priority for Massachusetts voters and many of the state's opinion leaders, each of these groups is strongly committed to improving public education. And they are beginning to understand how early childhood education lays the foundation for improving educational outcomes for children later on. This emerging understanding gives us an important opportunity to move the child care and early childhood education agenda to the political foreground in our state. We must not waste it.

We offer the following recommendations:

1. **Elevate the public's awareness of the need for, cost of, and benefits of quality child care and early childhood education.**

   Our poll results demonstrate that voters know very little about child care and early childhood education. We believe that a well-funded media campaign would help build and strengthen support for the public policy work that is the essential next step.

   **Implement a sustained (two-year) multi-media campaign.** The media messages should emphasize what our polls find to be of greatest interest to voters: the brain research that shows how important appropriate stimulation and nurturing care are to young children and studies documenting ways in which early childhood education improves later school success. We should test and refine additional messages that persuade voters that public investments in early childhood education and quality child care promote healthy child development which leads to improved learning in school and ultimately to a more highly skilled workforce. The campaign must help voters recognize the importance of the early childhood years and that early education is a public responsibility and a sound investment that benefits all our children and, as a consequence, all of us.

2. **Develop and promote an early childhood education public policy initiative.**

   We know that nearly 300,000 Massachusetts children (almost 70%) age five and under live either in married-couple families in which both parents work or in single-parent families in which that parent is employed. We must frame our response in a way that acknowledges this reality and recognizes that thousands of these families require help meeting the needs of their young children. It is necessary to create the political will to ensure that every child — and every family — is able to meet their needs for early childhood education and quality child care. To do so, we should join forces with those state policymakers who have demonstrated a commitment to these issues and who are willing to lead the charge.

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**Begin with a public policy proposal to make early childhood education available to every child — age three to five — who needs it.** This would ensure that all Massachusetts five-year-olds have access to full-day, full-year kindergarten, and that full-day, full-year "early childhood education" is available to all three- and four-year-olds. According to our polls, most voters support this idea. We recommend that early childhood education be available on a *voluntary* basis, that the services be accessible in a variety of settings (schools, community-based centers, etc.) in order to provide families with optimal choices, and that the programs be required to meet quality standards set by the Massachusetts Department of Education. We recognize that this commitment will require us to identify an adequate source of sustained funding, and will necessitate careful planning and implementation during a period of several years.

**Build support for a constellation of public policies to address the needs of children from birth to age three.** We believe that the needs of very young children and their families are best met by implementing a constellation of policies. At the core, there would be an expansion of quality child care, along with parental leave, flexible work time and job sharing, among other strategies, all targeted at promoting the healthy development of young children and their families.

3. **Engage new allies for children to work in political partnership with child care advocates.**

We need to reach beyond the small circle of child care advocates to build support for young children. We must encourage new partnerships with business leaders, policymakers, educators, union officials and religious leaders. Whether they recognize it or not, each of these groups has a big stake in child care and early childhood education policy and must be engaged in a strategic effort aimed at addressing the public policy vacuum.

**Enlist the help of the state's influential opinion leaders, particularly those from business.** With their positions of influence and proven problem-solving skills, business leaders can play a significant role in helping to shape public policy. This project has identified some of those leaders who are willing to help and they must be engaged.

**Involve a broad spectrum of voters, including parents, teachers, child care advocates and members of civic organizations and religious groups.** "If you can't get traction on the wholesale level," as one leader said, "you will never get the opinion leaders to work on it." We must develop a statewide grassroots strategy that actively engages parents, child care advocates, teachers, religious groups and other concerned citizens in this public policy work for children. They must make their voices heard to their elected officials.

4. **Focus on research.**

We need more information on the impact of the nearly $500 million in state and federal funding already committed to child care and early childhood education in Massachusetts. We need to demonstrate the results being produced by this investment. We need information



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that is specific to Massachusetts about how quality child care and early childhood education programs benefit children's development in the long-term, as well as family life.

**Researchers must give us the hard facts that will prove to policymakers and business leaders focused on the budgetary bottom-line that early childhood education spending will produce genuine short and long-term dividends for Massachusetts — and not just theoretical future savings.** Opinion leaders — especially those from business and government — want research that demonstrates how investments in early childhood education actually produce benefits in Massachusetts by enhancing a child's future success and by yielding measurable improvements in student achievement. It is essential that we document how these investments will improve the healthy development of our youngest citizens in the years ahead.

*Can* we change public opinion about the care and education of our youngest children? In some ways, we already have. In November 1999, the state legislature voted to create and provide funding in the FY2000 state budget for an Office of School Readiness in the state Department of Education [See Appendix E]. That recommendation emerged from this project during an interview with a state legislative leader.

We hope that the findings from this research and constituency building project will propel us toward effective action. Our Advisory Committee stands ready to work together for change, in partnership with our state policymakers and other committed citizens. We are not just making these recommendations. We intend to act on them, as we recommit our energy, resources and creativity to Massachusetts' youngest citizens.

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## ENDNOTES


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## APPENDIX A:
## Advisory Committee Members

Doug Baird, President
Associated Day Care Services

Jim Bell, Executive Director
Springfield Day Nursery

Ruth Bowman, Program Director
The Caroline and Sigmund Schott Foundation

Gerry D'Avolio, Executive Director
Massachusetts Catholic Conference

Elaine Fersh, Director
Parents United for Child Care

Steve Gorrie, President
Massachusetts Teachers Association

Elaine Guiney, District Director
U.S. Small Business Association

Bill Harris, Treasurer
KidsPac

Greg Jobin-Leeds, President
The Caroline and Sigmund Schott Foundation

Kathy Kelley, President
Massachusetts Federation of Teachers

Mary Lassen, Executive Director
Women's Educational and Industrial Union

Rick Lord, President and CEO
Associated Industries of Massachusetts

Alan Macdonald, Executive Director
Massachusetts Business Roundtable

Gwen Morgan, Consultant
Wheelock College

Paul O'Brien, President
The O'Brien Group, Inc.

Rev. Jossie Owens, Principal
Parkside Christian Academy

Marta Rosa, Executive Director
Child Care Resource Center

Judy Renehan Rouse, Director
Success By 6
United Way of Massachusetts Bay

Michelle Seligson, Executive Director
National Institute on Out-of-School Time

Bob Wadsworth, Program Officer
The Boston Foundation



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## APPENDIX B:
## Profile of Polled Voters

The first non-partisan statewide poll conducted for this project surveyed 400 registered voters across Massachusetts. The poll was conducted between Thursday, September 17 and Wednesday, September 23, 1998. Of these voters, 56% were female and 44% were male, mirroring the actual state population, which is 55% female and 45% male. With regard to party affiliation, 38% of voters polled were Democrats (actual statewide enrollment is 42%), 14% were Republicans (actual statewide enrollment is 14%) and 48% had an affiliation of "other" (actual statewide enrollment is 44%).

The second non-partisan statewide poll surveyed 400 registered voters across Massachusetts and was conducted between Monday, March 29 and Tuesday, April 6, 1999. Of these voters, 53% were female and 47% were male. With regard to party affiliation, 39% were Democrats, 14% were Republicans, and 47% had an affiliation of "other."



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## APPENDIX C:
## Interviewed Opinion Leaders and Child Care Experts *

Michael Albano, Mayor
Springfield, Massachusetts

Doug Baird, President
Associated Day Care Services

Charles Baker, Secretary
Massachusetts Executive Office of
Administration and Finance

Francis Barrett, Deputy Commissioner
Massachusetts Office of Child Care
Services

Kathleen Beckman, Senior Vice President
Human Resources, Policies and Practices
Fidelity Investments

Jim Bell, Executive Director
Springfield Day Nursery

Thomas Birmingham, Senate President
Massachusetts Senate

Roger Brown, President
Bright Horizons Family Solutions

State Representative Michael Cahill,
House Chairman
Massachusetts Joint Committee on
Human Services and Elderly Affairs

Diane Capstaff, Executive Vice President
Corporate Operations
John Hancock Financial Services

Kathleen Casavant, Secretary/Treasurer
Massachusetts AFL-CIO

Dennis Colling, Vice President
Human Resources
Partners HealthCare Systems

Clare Cotton, President
Association of Independent Colleges and
Universities of Massachusetts

Matthew Daniels, President
Massachusetts Family Institute

John Davis, Chairman and CEO
American Saw and Manufacturing
Company

Gerry D'Avolio, Executive Director
Massachusetts Catholic Conference

Robert DiCenso, Senior Vice President
The Gillette Company

Elaine Fersh, Director
Parents United for Child Care

Thomas Finneran, Speaker of the House
Massachusetts House of Representatives

State Representative Kevin Fitzgerald,
House Chairman
Massachusetts Legislative Children's
Caucus

State Representative Barbara Gardner,
Majority Whip
Massachusetts House of Representatives

Chad Gifford, Chairman and CEO
BankBoston, and Chairman
Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce

***Note: All titles reflect position held at time of interview.**

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Carol Goldberg, President
The AvCar Group

Steve Gorrie, President
Massachusetts Teachers Association

John Hamill, President
Fleet Bank, Massachusetts

Robert Haynes, President
Massachusetts AFL-CIO

Arnold Hiatt, Chairman
Stride Rite Foundation

Kathy Kelley, President
Massachusetts Federation of Teachers

State Representative Hal Lane,
House Chairman
Massachusetts Joint Committee on
Education

Alan Macdonald, Executive Director
Massachusetts Business Roundtable

Kathleen McGirr, Senior Vice President of
Human Resources
Fidelity Investments

Robert Mudge, Vice President of External
Communications
Bell Atlantic, Massachusetts Region

Peter Negroni, Superintendent
Springfield Public Schools

William O'Leary, Secretary
Massachusetts Executive Office of Health
and Human Services

Rev. Jossie Owens, Principal
Parkside Christian Academy

Thomas Payzant, Superintendent
Boston Public Schools

Warren Peppicelli, Vice President/
Associate Manager
New England Joint Board
Union of Needle Trades, Industrial and
Textile Employees (UNITE)

Peter Phillipes, Executive Vice President
and General Counsel
Stop & Shop Supermarket Company

Jack Rennie, President
Averstar, Inc.

Kris Rondeau, Organizer
The New Union Project
American Federation of State, County and
Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

Marta Rosa, Executive Director
Child Care Resource Center

Elisabeth Schaefer, Director of Early
Learning Services
Massachusetts Department of Education

John Silber, Chancellor
Boston University and Chairman,
Massachusetts Board of Education

David Starr, Publisher
Springfield Union News

William Taylor, Chairman
The Boston Globe

Evelyn Tobin, Director of Public Policy
YMCAs of Massachusetts

Eustis Walcott, Vice President of
Communications
Massachusetts Mutual Insurance
Company

Ardith Wieworka, Commissioner
Massachusetts Office of Child Care
Services


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## APPENDIX D:
## Expanded State Tax Deductions for Child and Dependent Care

The Massachusetts FY2000 state budget, enacted in November 1999, made significant expansions in family tax relief. The Child/Dependent Care state tax deduction for working families — which is currently $2,400 for one child and $4,800 for two or more children — will be doubled by 2002 according to the following schedule:

- $3,600 for one child and $7,200 for two or more children in January 2001
- $4,800 for one child and $9,600 for two or more children in January 2002

The FY2000 budget also expands the Child/Dependent Deduction for families who stay home to care for a dependent family member. The current deduction of $1,200 for one dependent and $2,400 for two or more dependents will expand to include elderly dependents and will be doubled by 2002. It will be phased in as follows:

- $2,400 for one dependent and $4,800 for two or more dependents in January 2001
- $3,600 for one dependent and $7,200 for two or more dependents in January 2002.

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## APPENDIX E:
## New Office of School Readiness

Section 28 of the FY2000 state budget includes a provision which directs the state board of education to "establish an office of school readiness which shall be responsible for developing program standards for early childhood programs operated by school districts, excluding any subcontractors that are not school districts, and teacher certification standards for those early childhood teachers who are required to receive such certification. The office may, pursuant to this section, provide technical assistance to other providers of early care and education services. The office shall be responsible for the administration of all department early childhood programs for children from birth through age six. It shall be the mission of the office to work in conjunction with the office for child care services, and such other state agencies as may be appropriate, to develop a statewide system of early childhood programs that promotes school readiness, early literacy and academic success for all Massachusetts children entering primary education. The office may submit legislative and budgetary recommendations to the commissioner, the clerk of the house of representatives and the clerk of the senate, and the house and senate committees on ways and means which it deems necessary to promote school readiness or improve the delivery of early education in the commonwealth."

The FY2000 state budget also includes a provision that appropriates "not less than $150,000... for the office of school readiness established pursuant to section 28."

# Acknowledgements

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I extend my deepest appreciation to the 20 members of our Advisory Committee. They gave generously of their time and expertise. It was a privilege to bring together these exceptional leaders, and I look forward to our future collaboration. I am particularly grateful to Marta Rosa, who is executive director of the Child Care Resource Center [CCRC]. She and her talented staff made it possible for CCRC to serve as the nonprofit fiscal sponsor for this project. Special thanks also go to Mary Lassen, who is executive director of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union. She and her outstanding staff graciously hosted the five meetings of the Advisory Committee. Advisory Committee member Rick Lord, President and CEO of Associated Industries of Massachusetts [A.I.M.], made it possible for A.I.M. to print this report. For that, I am most grateful.

This project was truly a team effort. It would not have been possible without pollster Irwin "Tubby" Harrison's expert services and candid counsel, and Project Associate Susan Wolfson's help and support. I also thank Yasemin Turkman for her early assistance. I am grateful to Ricki Morell for her outstanding work helping to write and pull together this final report. Carol Goldberg, President of the AvCar Group, and Charlotte Kahn, Director of the Boston Community Building Network at The Boston Foundation, also provided special help to this effort and to me, as did Paul Harrington, Associate Director of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University and Melissa Ludtke, a former *Time* correspondent.

To those organizations that gave us the funding to do this work, thank you! In addition to the Caroline and Sigmund Schott Foundation, a matching grant was provided by The Boston Foundation. Funds were also provided by the United Way of Massachusetts Bay, the Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation, the Boston Globe Foundation, Associated Day Care Services and Work/Family Directions.

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Finally, I want to thank the 48 opinion leaders and child care experts whom we interviewed for this project. I am sincerely thankful to them for taking the time to share their insights about one of the most pressing issues of our time.

Margaret Blood
Project Director

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For further information about
"**Our Youngest Children:**
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